

**Q&A CONFERENCE CALL
VBOC PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT**

VBOC-2016-02

March 2, 2016

1. How many pages can the Technical Proposal be?

Answer:

Your technical proposal should be no longer than 20 pages. While there was no page limits cited in the program announcement, we expect you to use your professional judgment and submit a technical proposal that is well-written, concrete and succinct.

2. How many pages can the Attachments and Exhibits be?

Answer:

While there is no limit on the number of attachments/exhibits or the pages, we ask that you use your professional judgment in reference to attachments and exhibits and don't inundate the evaluators with too many documents. Again be as succinct as possible.

3. What font should be used as well as what size should the font be and margin measurements?

Answer:

Again use your professional judgment keeping in mind that the font should be legible and easy to read.

4. Is the technical proposal to be single or double spaced? If doubled, can tables and charts be single spaced?

Answer:

See answers to questions 2 and 3.

5. Can tables and charts have smaller font size (i.e. 10 point)?

Answer:

See answers 2, 3, and 4

6. Are SBDC offices eligible to apply?

Answer:

Eligibility requirements are defined in Section 3.0 of the [Program Announcement](#).

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7. What Indirect Rate may we request as part of the proposal?

Answer:

If you have a current approved indirect cost rate agreement, you may enter that rate in your budget and attach a copy of your current rate agreement. If your rate has expired, you may enter the old rate as a 'place holder' and attach your letter to or from your cognizant agency stating that a new rate proposal has been submitted; however, if you are funded, you may not charge any funds from that indirect cost rate (placeholder) until the new rate has been established. At that time, a budget modification may be processed to enter the new rate and at that time, cost may be charged against that rate. If you have never had an indirect cost rate, you may enter what is referred to as a 10 percent de minimis rate without any documentation to support that rate. It is important that any cost paid from this rate cannot be charged as a direct cost. You may keep this rate as long as you wish, but only if you have never had an indirect cost rate. At any time, when you have an indirect cost rate developed, you can then replace the 10% rate with that new approved rate. If the new approved rate is below 10%, there will be no requirement to reimburse the federal government the difference. Additionally, if you replace that rate with an approved rate that is higher than the 10%, you shall not be able to retroactively charge that new rate to the beginning of the fiscal year. The new rate will become effective on the date of the modification and will be in effect until the rate agreement expires.

8. Can you please give me some clarification on the communities that are requested to be served within Southern California?

Answer:

Section 1.4 of the [Program Announcement](#) identifies all the counties that comprise Southern California. The organization awarded the VBOC cooperative agreement is expected to cover all counties listed. The counties include Santa Barbara County, Ventura County, Los Angeles County, San Bernardino County, Orange County, Riverside County, San Diego County and Imperial County.

9. Do you need to be an established business to qualify for this?

Answer:

Yes, the organization has to be established and be able to demonstrate the past performance and the expertise needed to carry out the purpose of the program announcement. This includes, providing technical assistance and counseling to small business owners and entrepreneurs to start, manage and grow successful small businesses.

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10. Can a new nonprofit organization apply for this grant, if the purpose of the foundation is to house, employ, and train homeless veterans and try to transition them into living on their own again?

Answer:

Non-profits that can demonstrate they're able to carry out the purpose of the program announcement and can demonstrate past performance providing technical assistance and counseling to small business owners and entrepreneurs to start, manage and grow successful small businesses are eligible to apply.

11. You indicate that VBOC will be required to attend 50 classes in a variety of venues. Can we assume you mean one or two classes in each of these venues?

Answer:

The [Program Announcement](#) provides a listing of defined coverage areas, military installations and projected Boots to Business sessions in Section 1.4. VBOCs will be expected to participate in the Boots to Business sessions within the defined coverage area.

12. For clarification, we would be submitting a budget for twenty-four months, broken down into the first 12 months (base period) and the second one option period of 12 months. Is the maximum budget of \$250,000 to cover 12 months or 24 months?

Answer:

Because Option or Renewal Year funding is treated as a separate budget requirement, you need only to submit a budget for the initial 12-month timeframe. Depending on the availability of funding for the option/renewal year, the center's performance, and continued authority of the program, OVBD will request a new budget for the second year or any subsequent years.

13. There is a reference to the development of a training and professional development plan illustrating competency in counseling and training of veteran businesses and service disabled of veteran businesses concerns.

Answer:

This is a requirement for all organizations that are awarded a VBOC cooperative agreement. The requirement assures that professional VBOC staff members have the expertise and training to provide technical assistance and counseling to small business owners and entrepreneurs to start, manage and grow successful small businesses

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14. Based on the map it is clear that each location will be guided by splitting the Sacramento listed bases on exact bases to be served, is that correct?

Answer:

The VBOC in Sacramento will retain its current coverage area, with the exception of the counties and installations listed in Section 1.4

15. I am looking at the new VBOC Program Announcement VBOC-2016-02. On page 4, it mentions Appendix 1. I do not have that in my document. I do have a PowerPoint that lists the military bases but there is no Boots2Business Information of past and future attendees. Where may I find that information?

Answer:

The Program Announcement in grants.gov is linked to the [OVBD website](#) where all documents have been uploaded. If you do not have all the documents in grants.gov, you simply need to click on the hyperlinks in either the Synopsis or the Final Instruction Document to locate all documents on OVBD's website.

16. We are The Foundation for Integrated Housing providing housing for veterans in Southern California. Would it be possible for you to please share information with us regarding how to apply for grants so that we may expand our program?

Answer:

To apply for grants or cooperative agreements through grants.gov, an organization must be registered in Sam.gov. If your organization is not registered in Sam.gov you will not be able to gain access to grant opportunities on the grants.gov portal.

Once you have access, you must identify an Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) who will be responsible for uploading and downloading documents – only the AOR has the authority to do this for your organization. It may be a good idea to have an alternate AOR as well in the event the regular AOR is out and there is an opportunity which you would like to submit a proposal. All federal government grant, cooperative agreement and contract opportunities are available through these portals (Sam.gov and grants.gov).

17. Does this grant apply to ecommerce business or just brick and mortar? My husband is a disabled veteran and I have had a small online business for the past couple of years. We want to take it to the next level.

Answer:

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Non-profits that can demonstrate they're able to carry out the purpose of the program announcement and can demonstrate past performance providing technical assistance and counseling to small business owners and entrepreneurs to start, manage and grow successful small businesses are eligible to apply.

The organization will need to have a physical location where veteran small business owners/entrepreneurs may come in (face-to-face) for individual counseling and training activities, in addition to providing assistance through various other media, such as webinars, online and telephonic assistance where geography impedes the clients' ability to physically come in for assistance.

18. How exactly do we go about applying for this grant and does the type of business matter?

Answer:

The Application and Submission process can be found in Section 4.0 of the [Program Announcement](#).

19. What is the difference between a grant and a Cooperative Agreement (CA)?

Answer:

The purpose of a grant is to transfer money, property, services, or anything of value to a recipient in order to accomplish a public purpose. No substantial involvement is anticipated between the government and recipient during the performance of the activity.

The purpose of the cooperative agreement is to transfer funds to a recipient to accomplish a public purpose; however, substantial involvement is anticipated between the government and the recipient during the performance of the activity.

20. Is there an SDVOB preference, VA has vetted my firm and certified as an SDVOB?

Answer:

This announcement does not have an SDVOB preference.

21. Is an SDVOB eligible as a "private organization or business" as noted in paragraph 3.1 Eligible Applicants?

Answer:

All organizations/institutions listed under Section 3.1 of the Program Announcement addresses eligibility regardless of SDVOB status.

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22. Are all non-profits (such as VEDC that provide business development services) eligible to apply, or are you looking specifically for “veterans’ nonprofit community based organizations”. Would that latter description be based on the organization’s mission statement or scope of work?

Answer:

All organizations/institutions listed under Section 3.1 of the Program Announcement addresses eligibility requirements. Those organizations listed are eligible.

23. On pg 3 of the announcement under So Cal, it states that the Boots to Business class projection for 2016 is 50 sessions. Is this an aggregate number of sessions for the 9 installations?

Answer:

The Program Announcement provides a listing of defined coverage areas, military installations and projected Boots to Business sessions in Section 1.4. VBOCs will be expected to participate in the Boots to Business sessions within the defined coverage area. The Boots to Business class projection is the aggregate number for all listed installations.

24. On pg. 11, Section 4.5 Attachments and Exhibits: will an audit of our 2014 990 form be acceptable?

Answer:

No. If you received a total of \$750,000 of federal funding during any fiscal year, including contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans, you are required to have a Single Audit in accordance with Subpart F—Audit Requirements of 2 CFR 200. If the total federal funds are below \$750,000, you are required to submit an audited financial statement. The audit must cover the most recent year, which is usually 2015; however, if your organization has not completed their 2015 Single Audit, submit the 2014 Single Audit with an annotation when your 2015 Single Audit will be available

25. The University of Texas at San Antonio will be submitting a proposal to operate a VBOC, however, the requested service area does not include significant military installations located in San Antonio. We have several years of significant experience providing business counseling to active military and veterans as well as collaborating with the SBA by providing instruction in the Boots 2 Business and B2BR program. The VBOC designated to service military installations in San Antonio is at the southern tip of Texas, over 300 miles away.

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Could we propose including Joint Base San Antonio Ft. Sam Houston, Lackland AFB, and Randolph AFB as a part of our service area in addition to the 8 installations already proposed?

Answer:

Applicants should focus their technical proposal on the coverage areas and installations listed in Section 1.4.

26. Page 2, Section 1.4 Purpose:

Can you clarify what is meant by “initial funding,” and for what expenses can the funds be used?

Answer:

Initial funding period is the first 12-month base period, May 1, 2016 – April 30, 2017.

27. Page 6, Section 2.4 Funding Information:

Can you provide specific details and examples of how the funding from the grant can be used (e.g., salaries for program staff, course delivery, counseling, facilities, etc.)?

Answer:

Information regarding how funding may be used is outlined in Section 8.6 of the [Program Announcement](#) and [SF-424A](#) which was one of the documents that should have been downloaded from the [grants.gov](#) portal. We strongly suggest if you have not downloaded all documents, you need to do so and review these documents thoroughly.

28. Page 6, Section 2.4 Funding Information:

Can you provide examples of pre-award costs that are deemed allowable, allocable, and reasonable?

Answer:

Pre award costs are those incurred prior to the effective date of the award directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the award where such costs are necessary to comply with the proposed delivery schedule or period of performance. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the award and only with the written approval of the awarding agency.

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29. Page 10, Section 4.3 Technical Proposal, Item A, and Page 24, Training:
What is the expectation on volume of additional training courses to be provided to the VBOC clients with regards to entrepreneurship training, financial training, follow-up training activities related to B2B and B2BR, general business topics?

Answer:

The expectation is that the VBOC will develop, implement and conduct training, as needed, based on the demand and specific needs of the veterans and military spouses within their coverage area.

30. Page 10, Section 4.3 Technical Proposal, Item B:
Would the newly funded VBOC be responsible for delivering all B2B curricula as outlined on the B2B website, or just the two-day Foundations of Entrepreneurship classroom based course:

Answer:

VBOCs are expected to deliver instruction on the 2-Day Introduction to Entrepreneurship course only.

31. "The Boots to Business course has three parts: 1) The Entrepreneurship Track Overview – an introductory video shown during the mandatory five-day TAP GPS course; 2) Introduction to Entrepreneurship – a two-day classroom course offered as one of three additional TAP tracks; and, 3) Foundations of Entrepreneurship – an eight-week instructor-led online course that offers in-depth instruction on the elements of a business plan and tips and techniques for starting a business."

Answer:

VBOCs are expected to deliver instruction on the 2-Day Introduction to Entrepreneurship course. VBOCs are expected to participate in all B2B trainings within their respective states as well as some of these trainings outside their state of residence.

32. Is there a cost to the VBOC for the B2B and B2BR course materials that are provided to the client? Is that cost to be included in the itemized budget?

Answer:

There are no costs for course materials, and should not be included in the budget.

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33. Page 10, Section 4.3 Technical Proposal, Item F:

What are the expectations regarding competency in counseling and training of Veteran Businesses and Service Disabled Veteran Business concerns? For instance, does the VBOC staff need to have a license or certification to provide counseling services?

Answer:

All VBOC staff are expected to have experience in providing technical assistance and counseling to small business owners and entrepreneurs to start, manage and grow successful small businesses. The level of knowledge and expertise should be reflected in staff resumes, which should be included in the application.

34. Page 10, Section 4.3 Technical Proposal, Item H:

What is the expected volume of client counseling services to be provided, (e.g., number of clients normally seen during the 40 hours per week VBOC hours of operation?)

Answer:

Counseling goals will vary by VBOC and coverage area. The technical proposal should include counseling numbers that take in consideration factors such as; veteran population, military spouse population, Boots to Business training expectations, number of military installations, staffing and the availability of other technical assistance resources.

35. Page 23, Section 8.4 Announcement Definitions, Counseling:

What is the expected volume (# of clients) receiving long term counseling (5 or more hours of contact time) in a given fiscal year? Does counseling provided in a group meeting constitute counseling services or is it only one-on-one to an individual (face2face, phone, online)?

Answer:

Counseling/client goals will vary by VBOC and coverage area. The technical proposal should include counseling numbers that take in consideration factors such as; veteran population, military spouse population, Boots to Business training expectations, number of military installations, staffing and the availability of other technical assistance resources.

The definition of counseling is provided in Section 8.4 of the [Program Announcement](#).

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36. Appendix 1 Present and Proposed VBOC Locations:

Is it reasonable to base our projected program participant levels and service offerings on the estimated volumes of service members provided in the slide presentation?

Does historical data exist to support estimated levels of program participation from existing VBOCs? If not, is there another source we can access to obtain data and information about the volume of service members in our area who fit the demographic for the program?

Answer:

It's reasonable to base your projected Boots to Business participation on the data provided in Section 1.4. The technical proposal should also take in consideration factors such as; veteran population, military spouse population and number of military installations. Suggested sources of data include the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor and Census.